

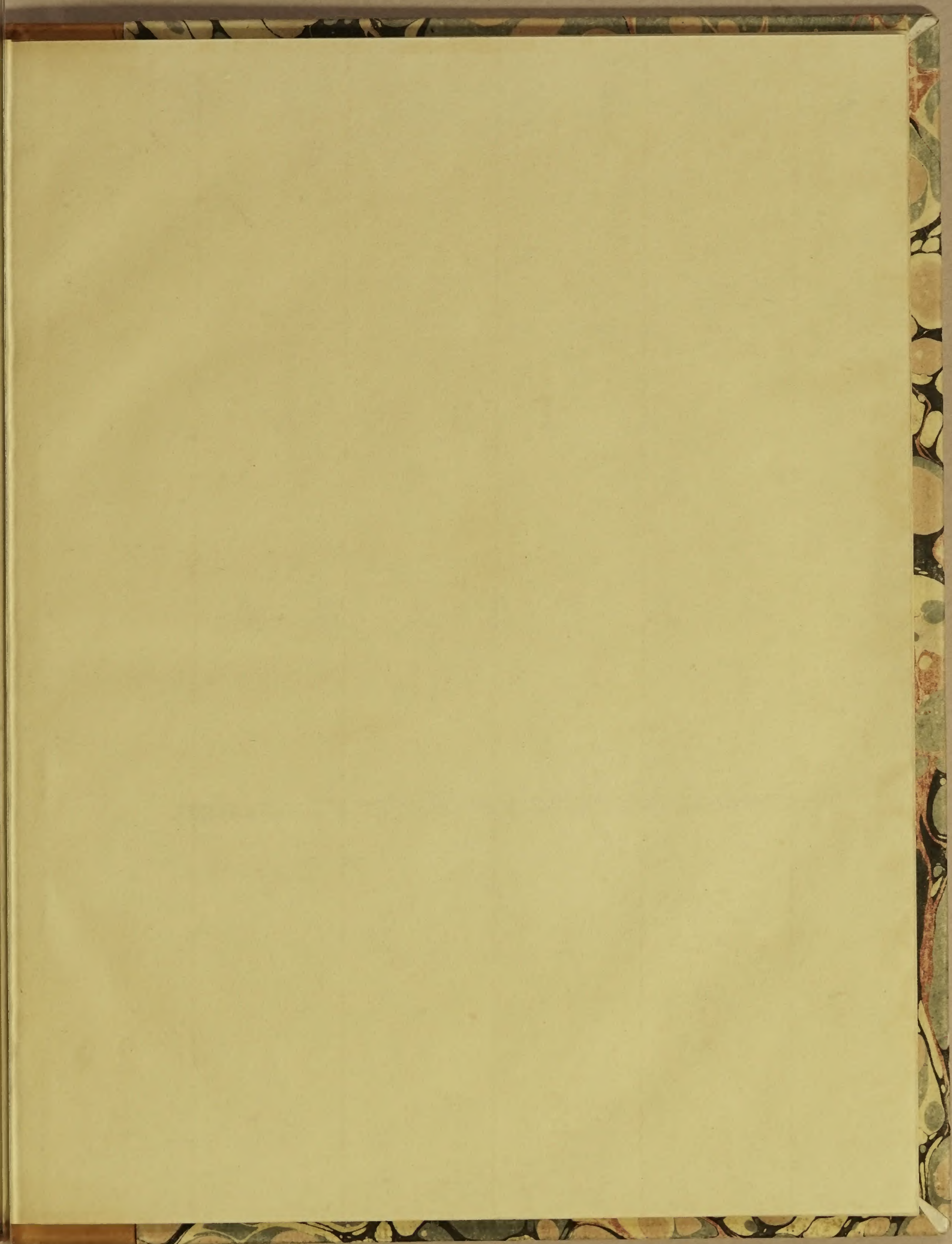


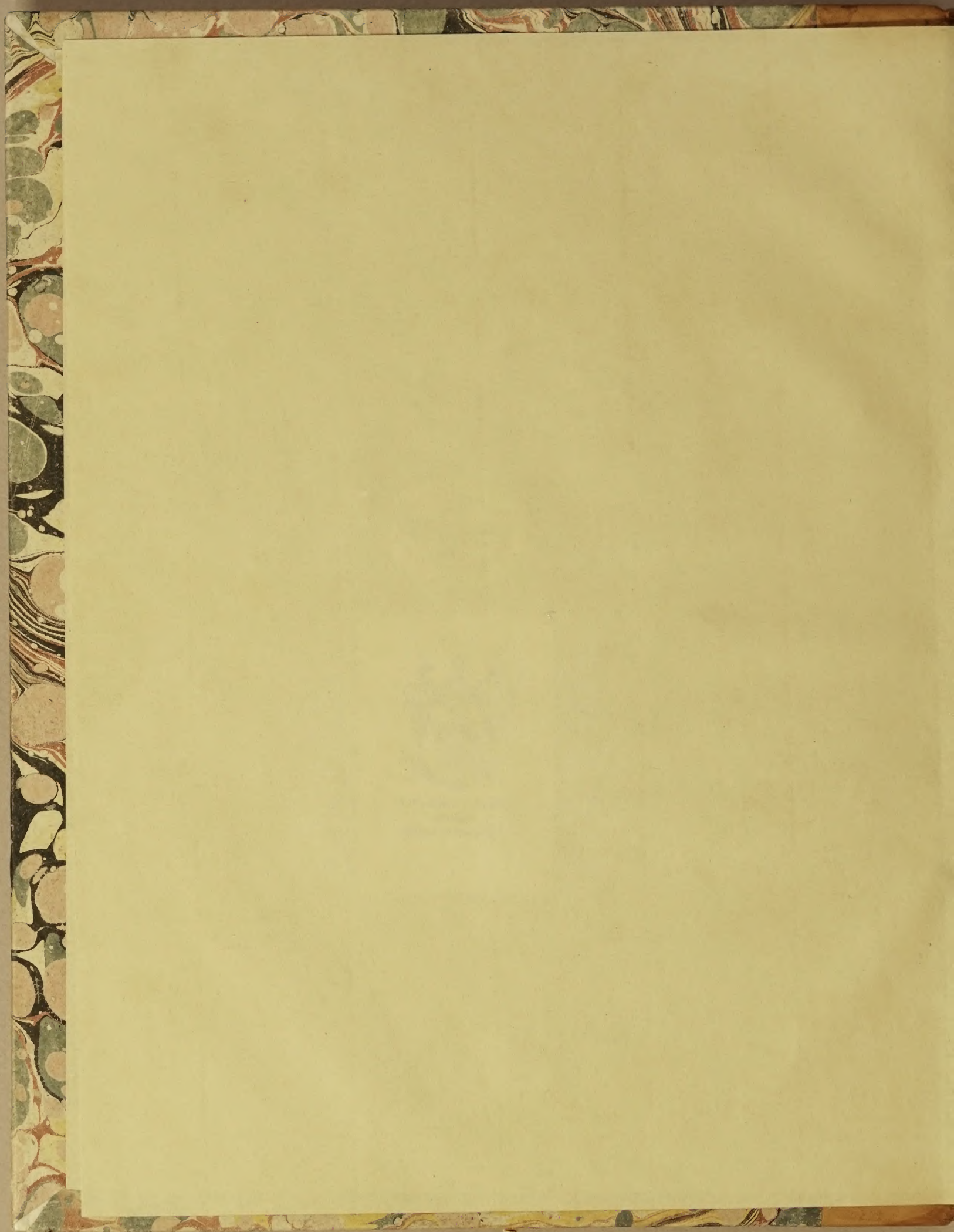
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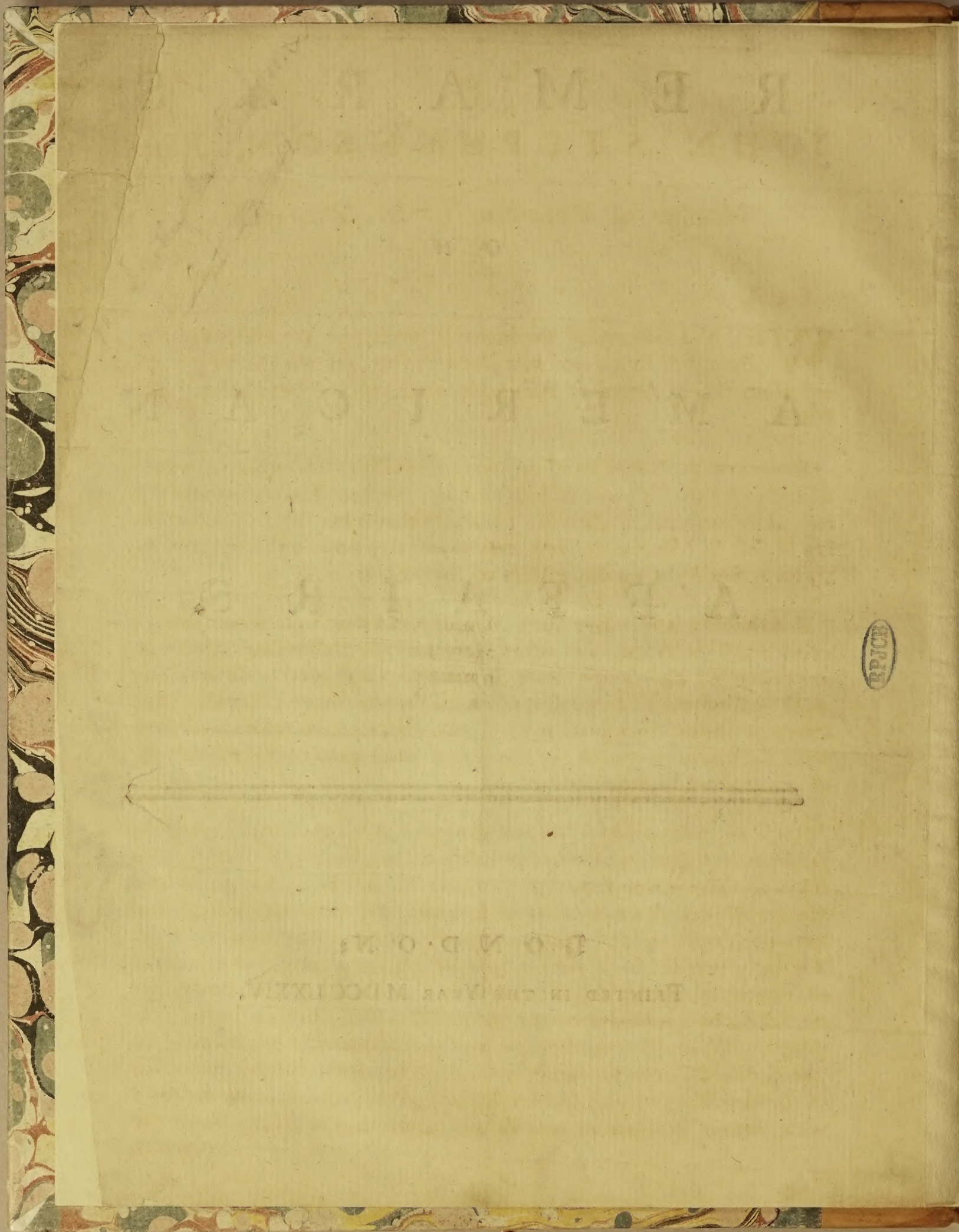
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A M E R I C A N

A F F A I R S.

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RPJCB

T O

JOHN STEPHENSON, Esq;

Member of Parliament for ST. MICHAELS.

S I R,

WHEN I did myself the honor of paying my respects to you at Brentford Butts, you was pleased to say, you should be glad of my Remarks on American Affairs, in order to lay them before Lord North.

SENSIBLE as I may be of my want of abilities to convey my own thoughts in a masterly and striking manner, I will not however decline the task on this account, as there is a possibility that it may help to undeceive his Majesty's Minister in some very material points, and may tend to throw a new light on the politics of that country.

I PRESUME it necessary for a Minister to know from whom he receives his information, and what opportunity his informant has had of acquiring his knowledge, least, in matters at so great a distance, he might be influenced to measures dictated by the interest, caprice, and often overheated imagination of a person, totally unacquainted either with the manners, genius, or the general disposition of the inhabitants of the country he treats of.

IT is not from vanity I become an egotist; but in order to shew how far I am interested, and what pretensions I have to a knowledge of the subject. The person therefore who does himself the honor to address you on this occasion is a native of England, all his nearest connections have been and are employed in the service of their Sovereign, he spent the early part of his life in the same service, and, consequently, must have an attachment to his Mother Country, and a spirit of loyalty for his King; he has resided twenty years in America; his family and property are all in that country; he has been a member of assembly in one of the Colonies for several years, and has spent the last five years in the middle Colonies, where he had an acquaintance and intimacy with some of the leading men of the Councils and Assemblies of the Provinces,

Provinces of New England, New York, Jerſey, Penſilvania, Maryland and Virginia; he has read the charters, laws, and hiſtories of theſe ſeveral Provinces, and did endeavour to make himſelf acquainted with their political, general and partial views.

THUS far, Sir, I thought proper to preſiſe, to give weight to my obſervations, and to evince that I am unbiſſed, uninfluenced, by any motives, other than a zealous attachment to his Maſeſty's Royal Houſe, to the happineſs of mankind in general, and Great Britain and her Colonies in particular; and I may truly ſay, by an enthuſiaſtic deſire, to ſee ſuch a compact eſtabliſhed between Great Britain and her Colonies, as may laſt to the end of time, give wealth and conſequence to the former, peace and happineſs to the latter, and preſerve America in ſuch a ſtate of dependance on the Mother Country, as may be beneficial to both.

IN treating of the diſagreements of communities in order to their reconcilment, it will be neceſſary to preſerve nearly the ſame mode of proceeding, as in diſputes between individuals, by ſtating the claims and deſires of the parties, with this difference, that in communities there are ſeveral orders or degrees of men, each influenced by its particular ſtation, views or proſpects, I ſhall therefore claſs out and arrange the inhabitants of North America into their ſeveral orders, point out the diſtinct views and deſires of each, and, on the whole, humbly offer my opinion.

THE firſt order of men, I ſhall treat of, are thoſe who poſſeſs the greateſt ſhare of property, unconnected with commerce. This claſs is principally compoſed of ſuch who live by the intereſt of their money (very many of whom are, truly ſpeaking, exorbitant Uſurers) and others, who have already made, or are making, their fortunes by Land-jobbing (another ſpecies of oppreſſion.) The general opinion of this order of men, reſpecting the diſputes ſubſiſting between Great Britain and her Colonies is, that matters can never be right, until a nobility or diſtinctions are eſtabliſhed in America, and voting by ballot for the members of aſſembly aboliſhed in thoſe Colonies where it is allowed. They ſee a neceſſity (they ſay) of having a number of offices created in America to gratify the leading families, and thereby to ſupport government. And, in conſideration of theſe advantages,
they

they would readily acquiesce with the taxation of the British parliament, provided it did not affect the landed or moneyed interest; what I mean by the moneyed interest in this case is, *money let out at interest*.

THE next order in point of consequence are the commercial men, who vary their claims and desires as it serves their immediate interests; they sometime ago entered into resolves not to import English goods, until the revenue acts were repealed; but their intentions were to dispose of their stock then in hands on more advantageous terms; their purposes served, they broke their engagement; and it is remarkable, that those who were the most violent in bringing about the non-importation agreement, were the very men who exerted themselves most to break through it.

THE third class consists of the practitioners of the law, and the other officers of the courts of judicature; a set of men now become numerous in America, and from their connexion with the two former classes, are not without influence. Such of them as are unprovided for by Government are flaming patriots. But their opposition to Parliamentary taxation is founded entirely upon what they conceive to be constitutional principles. In this they disagree with each other, as much as it is possible for men, whose ideas are shackled by their professional education, and who argue upon principles which are not fixed; and which, if they were fixed, could no more be adapted to the present British empire, than the shoe of a child to the foot of a giant; and I am convinced, that were any of their systems carried into execution, it would be full as injurious to the whole, as the present anarchy that reigns throughout that unhappy country. The gentlemen of this profession, who have wrote in favor of the absolute power of Parliament, are either in the pay of Government, or in a state of expectancy: it is hard to know which party have done most mischief. Men of understanding and reasonable principles are fired with indignation at the impracticable absurd schemes of the one, and the despotic doctrines of the other.

THE reverend the clergy, of every sect, constitute my fourth class; very many of them are exemplary in their conduct and morals; the toleration, almost universal in this country, contributes not a little to pro-

mote in the several pastors an emulation in morality and decency; but I am sorry to observe, that a very great majority of this class aim at promoting separate interests and invidious distinctions; they do this from a prospect of giving consequence to their several societies, and thereby to acquire weight to themselves. Such dispositions are not confined to the clergy of any particular sect; each wish for power, and would readily second the operations of that government, however cruel and arbitrary, which should indulge them with some few persecuting powers. The above four classes, or order of men, have views each for their own aggrandizement, which are however incompatible with the peace, happiness and consequence of the great community; and as the members of these classes are those (and only those) who have access to his Majesty's Ministers, or persons of any consequence on this side the water, their every scheme has tended to influence Government to such measures, as would enable them to exercise a tyranny over their fellow subjects in that part of the world; and they hide their real intentions, under the specious pretexts of the necessity of their being properly supported, in order to preserve good order and obedience to Government.

THE fifth class of men, whose dispositions I intend to describe, are the yeomandry and peasantry of this country, who, for good sense, understanding, virtue and useful learning, may truly be said to excel the same order of individuals in any part of the world. From the better sort of this class, the members of assembly (save only in capital towns) are chiefly chose; the general sentiments of these men are, that, for the sake of mutual advantage, as well as inclination, they wish for such a compact to subsist between Great Britain and her Colonies, as may secure to Great Britain an increasing revenue, on account of her protection; and also to assist to support the dignity of the Crown, together with a stipulation for extraordinary exigencies, such as war, &c. this, added to the advantages of an exclusive trade, they think a sufficient requisition on the part of Great Britain. And in lieu of which, they think themselves intitled to civil and religious freedom in the greatest extent, consistent with the good of their particular communities; and to have the power of restraining, in some measure, the officers of their several governments, from acts of injustice, neglect or oppression; they acknowledge many defects in their several constitutions and charters, but they however think them preferable to being at the mercy of any unrestrained individual

individual, or body of men, who, situated at a great distance, could not readily redress their grievances; they recount (and I am sorry to say with some truth) many instances of oppression, neglect, partiality, injustice and cruelty committed by his Majesty's servants, and the officers of the revenue, for which the injured could never get redress, and were eventually ruined in seeking for it; they complain, that the aristocratic interest is encouraged and countenanced in the Colonies, to the injury of virtue, industry of the valuable kind, and the simplicity of manners, so necessary in all well regulated communities, particularly in Colonies so far distant from the Mother Country.

THE last order of men are very inconsiderable in point of property, number, consequence, or virtue to the whole community, they consist of sailors, porters, fishermen, and other the appendages to large commercial towns; who, without thought or fear of consequences, are ready to commit any acts of desperation or madness which may present. The good regulations and exact discipline which formerly subsisted in the American towns are now no more, the people have lost the confidence they once had in their governments, and they see, without emotion, the savage practices of these banditti. The officers of government, and the aristocratic interest of America, have made no serious attempt to put a stop to these disorders, but, on the contrary, have in a secret and underhand manner, promoted most acts of capital depredation, which have been committed in that country these last ten years, from the reflection, that the consequent correction for such misdeeds, must eventually throw more power into their hands. It is ridiculous enough to see the pains some men have taken to be insulted, in order to make it a plea of merit; and it is too true, that many of them have received rewards in consequence of their earned ill treatment. But neither the Ministers of the present, or any former period, can be justly censured on this account, for they can only judge from the informations which they receive; and here I cannot help remarking, that as very few Americans ever wait on a Minister, but with an expectation of some favors; consequently they take care to inform themselves, as to the opinion or system then adopted by the Minister, and they are generally prudent enough to regulate their answers accordingly. I here subjoin a remark I once heard made by Lord Colvill, when Commander in Chief of his Majesty's fleet in America, who, speaking on this subject, said, " that
" it

“ it was scarcely possible for his Majesty’s Ministers to be justly informed as to American affairs, for the officers of the several governments were generally partizans in all disputes, and consequently represent unfairly ; a Commander in Chief, either of the Army or Navy, has seldom any intimate acquaintance but with the King’s servants, and the information they almost always get from them is founded on prejudice ; besides, military men seldom trouble themselves to enter minutely into the principles of government, or the cause or consequence of measures.”

FROM this general and short view of the dispositions of the inhabitants of America, it may be inferred, that they are now in a state unsettled and unhappy, the several orders jealous of each other, and this country, to whom formerly they used to look up for protection and redress, they now consider in the light not of a parent but of a tyrant ; they have in a great measure lost that attachment which they were remarkable for having to this kingdom, and the family of his present Majesty on the throne ; the officers of Government have contributed not a little to this general disaffection ; the language of these men are, that the inhabitants of America have hitherto been but too happy, and that now it is time they should experience some of the miseries felt in other countries ; and they enforce the mandates of Government, not with the soothing arguments of the utility or necessity of measures, but with threats and insults : I would not be understood in this, or any of my general observations, to insinuate, that there are not some exceptions to them : in America there are many men of large property, who have acquired their fortunes in the most just and honourable manner, and who possess the most benevolent hearts ; there are merchants there who would forego every prospect of private advantage for their country’s good ; and most true, however strange it may appear, there are in that country lawyers of the most liberal sentiments in respect of government, and who possess philanthropy in the highest degree ; there is also a possibility, that among the clergy may be found some who wish well to the civil and religious liberties of mankind ; and many of his Majesty’s servants are justly intitled to be excepted from my general remarks on them, and who would wish to restrain the violence of their brethren were it in their power,

MATTERS cannot long continue in their present state ; disaffection ever watches for a favorable opportunity to shake off a dependence ; and be the event what it may, it must be injurious to both countries, and in particular to Great Britain.

SHOULD such an event take place, I believe it will not be premeditated, as really the Americans have not even a serious wish of the kind ; but there is no accounting for what trifling accidents may produce. The expulsion of the Austrian army out of Genoa, in the year 1746, is a striking instance of the power of an enraged and disaffected community.

PERMIT me now, Sir, most humbly to offer a few hints, as to the method which I conceive might best tend to promote a happy and lasting reconciliation between Great Britain and her Colonies ; and if they can be of any use, I shall think myself sufficiently rewarded.

BUT before I enter on that part of my subject, I beg leave to make some observations on an opinion which prevails much in this kingdom, to wit, that the Americans wish to shake off their dependence and connexion with this country, and that it is necessary to curb and oppress them, in order to protract that period. The doctrine in itself is as ridiculous and absurd, as the means proposed to prevent it is unjust and infamous. The Americans have good sense enough to know, that the moment the connection between Great Britain and them is dissolved, they may bid farewell to all domestic happiness. The rivalry between the different orders in each community, the contention for pre-eminence by the several provinces, religious persecution, that inseparable attendant of domestic wars, will render their country a theatre of slaughter, without even a prospect of having a desirable form of government established in consequence. The Americans know all this ; and nothing but oppression and insult, or what tends to the same thing, leaving them in a state of uncertainty, or allowing them only an unequitable compact, can force them to any measures tending to a separation.

THE steps necessary to promote a happy reconciliation, I shall divide under two heads.

FIRST, to prevent any ill effects which may follow from the present acts of parliament against the Americans, lest they may be drove to
C desperation,

desperation, and also to impress them with a sense of his Majesty's royal clemency and regard for them, I humbly think it expedient—to give orders to the several commanders of his Majesty's fleet and armies in that country, to preserve the strictest discipline, and prevent those under their command from treating the Americans ~~nor~~ with insult ~~nor~~ oppression; to acquaint such of the merchants of London, who have interest or connections in America, of his Majesty's royal intentions to take American affairs into contemplation, and to grant them such an equitable compact as his Majesty in Parliament should see meet; this intelligence will diffuse joy and gladness throughout the Continent, and stifle every idea of opposition; and should his Majesty, on the prorogation, graciously recommend to his Parliament, during their recess, to consider of a proper compact or bill of rights for the American Colonies; in framing of which should he recommend to them an attention to equity, mutual advantage, and free toleration in regard to religion, it would have a very good effect. 2dly, That a compact, and other necessary regulations to support it, should be entered on as expeditiously as the importance of the subject could admit; which, if well and judiciously framed, would reflect everlasting glory on his Majesty and on his Ministers. This, Sir, to a patriot King, and a Minister of understanding and philanthropy, must be a most desirable crisis. If forms of government decide the happiness of mankind, whether we consider them in a social or individual capacity, surely it must be a godlike act to frame and grant such a constitution, as might entail happiness on the inhabitants of a vast empire to the latest period of time. That a form of government, with the principles of longevity, may be framed and carried into execution, is to me past all doubt, provided it be founded on the following essential principles, without which no compact can long subsist, particularly in a country every way circumstanced as America now is.—This compact should be equitable, otherwise it can last no longer, than until the aggrieved party have strength and an opportunity to shake off the yoke. It should have annexed, or blended with it, some influencing laws, which might add strength and solidity to the compact, and should interfere no further with the natural rights of mankind, than might be absolutely necessary for the aggregate good. It should destroy the rising aristocracy in America, and allow of no separate privileges to any particular order of individuals; distinctions must ever tend to promote a revolution; a state in which there are many Nobles,

Nobles, and which does not possess the extraordinary resources and commerce of Great Britain, must have a numerous vagrant poor, who are ready instruments, headed by an ambitious leader, to effect a revolution. The compact should abolish the rivalship of the several provinces; it should not be perplexed with speculative subtleties, which might render it uncertain; it should particularly provide for the due administration of justice, without regard either to the forms or practice of the courts of law of Great Britain: merely for the sake of similarity; it should provide for the free exercise of all religions, and should tend to encourage a yeomandry, which must be highly advantageous to Great Britain, whether we consider her in a legislative or commercial capacity. An independent yeomandry, unless highly injured, seldom are fond of change; consequently, they make the best subjects. A village or district, inhabited by a hundred yeomen, will take off more British manufactures than ten Noblemen with a thousand slaves; and surely it must be a desirable object to give happiness to the many, rather than by aggrandizing a few, to render the many miserable.

It should restrain the spirit of usury, which is now extending its baneful influence over all America; it should provide for the collection of his Majesty's revenue, and, by making it the interest of every individual to be just in this respect, thereby render oppressive laws unnecessary; the constitution should be so framed, as to prevent rather than punish crimes; many men will say, that these are chimerical and impracticable schemes; for, had they been otherwise, that almost every legislature would have adopted them. I answer, that no period of history can furnish us with an example of a people fitted to frame a good form of government for themselves, consequently there never was one; and it is not to be wondered at that good regulations should never succeed, when the principles of the constitution were defective; the Americans, left to themselves, would not, I am sure, establish a good form of government, the interest of individuals would ever interfere with and counteract the publick good. But though they might not agree in such measures among themselves, yet at this period they would be glad to receive such a form of government with thankfulness from the legislature of this kingdom; this opportunity once lost, is lost for ever!

I do not presume to enter into the particulars of such a compact, it would take up much time ; the King's Ministers can never want assistance ; the Philosopher, the man of enlarged sentiments, and the lover of mankind, would readily give every assistance to a Patriot King and Minister, who should call upon them on so glorious an occasion.

For your ease in reading, I have got this printed ; there are but three copies of it, I send you two of them ; it is not intended to be made publick.

I am, S I R,

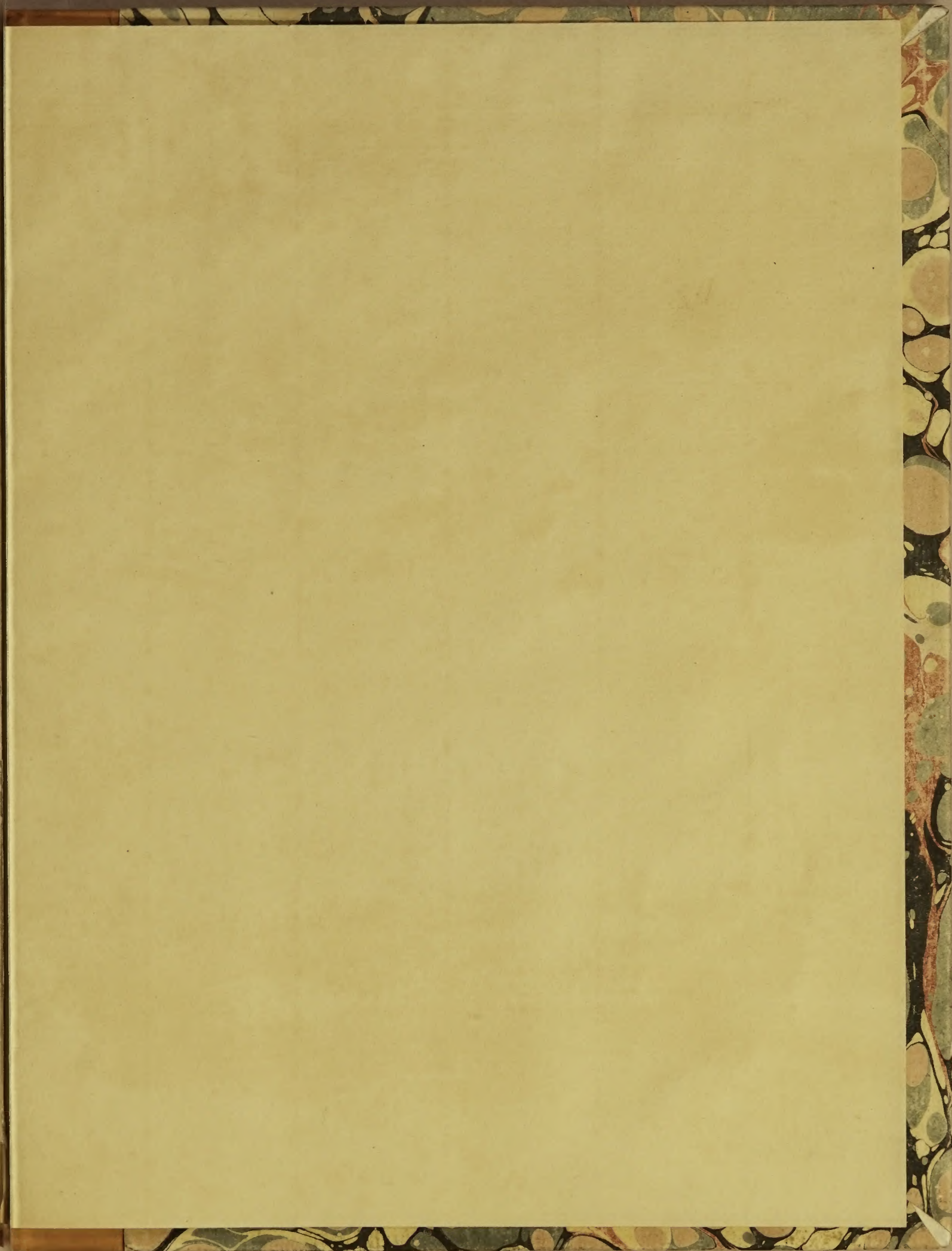
With the greatest respect and esteem,

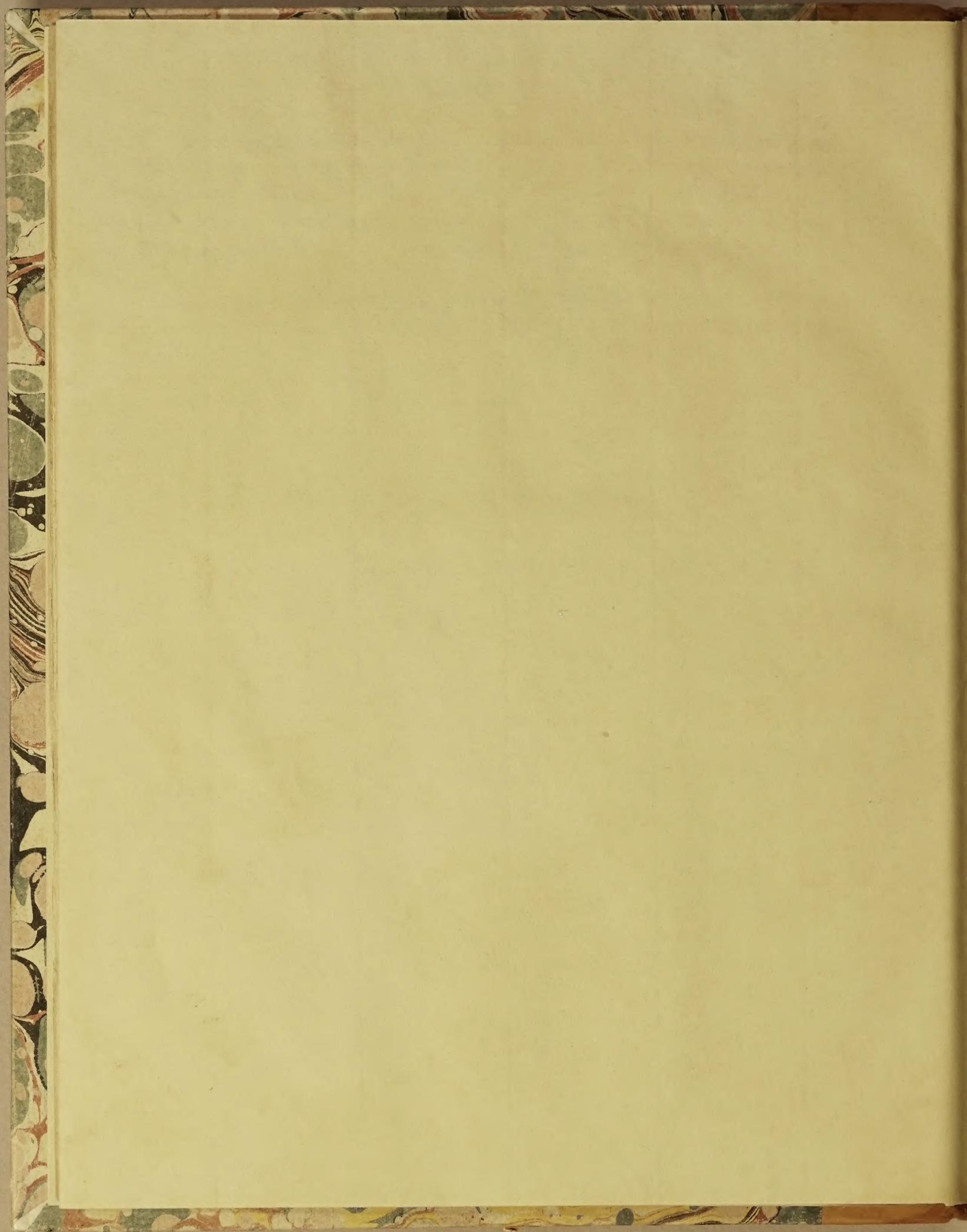
Your obliged and obedient very humble servant,

London May 7th 1774

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